



Children being 'conned' by misleading food packaging

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CHILDREN are being conned by food companies who are making fatty and sugary foods appear to be healthy, a new study suggests.

Some of Australia's most popular brands, including Kellogg's and Nestle, have been accused of making food that appeals to children look healthier than it actually is, the Flinders University study shows.

Researchers, led by lecturer Kaye Mehte, found 157 products on a major supermarket chain's shelves with

packaging designed to appeal to children through the use of cartoons, competitions and give-aways.

More than three quarters of these products were deemed to be unhealthy, primarily because they are high in fat and sugar. However, more than half of them had prominent nutrition claims on the packaging, boasting the product is, for example, "99 per cent fat free", "high in calcium" or has "no artificial colours", they found.

"This has the potential to mislead and confuse children as well as parents who would be more inclined to purchase

products carrying claims about health and nutrition", Dr Mehte said.

Her comments came as the Federal Government last year said it did not support recommendations from a federal review to introduce traffic-light food labeling. Obesity Policy Coalition executive manager Jane Martin said that "using these techniques to attract children to unhealthy food at a time when childhood obesity is at record levels is simply unethical".

A spokeswoman from Nestle denied the company misled children or made un-

healthy food appear to be healthy. She said products such as Milo cereal met the Heart Foundation Tick nutrient criteria and the company had reduced the sugar content.

A spokesman for Kellogg's said such products have daily intake guidelines which "show the amount of sugar, salt, fat, sodium and kilojoules per serving on the front of the packs so that parents can weigh up the nutritional information before picking the product up off the shelf".